

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 974
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USMISSION NATO
USDELMC BRUSSELS
USNMR SHAPE
USCINCEUR
CINCPAC
USDOCOSOUTH
USLOSACLANT

S E C R E T ISLAMABAD 3696

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ANKARA FOR US CENTO REP, AND CHIEF US ELEMENT CENTO

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: CENTO, MILI, NATO, PK
SUBJ: NATO-CENTO AIR DEFENSE INFORMATION EXCHANGE AGREEMENT

REF: STATE 70897,

1. EMBASSY HAS CONSIDERED QUESTION OF FORMAL NATO-CENTO AIR DEFENSE INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND HAS FOLLOWING COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO PARA 5 REFTEL. WE DO NOT BELIEVE WE HAVE SUFFICIENT INFORMATION OR BACKGROUND TO MAKE DEFINITE DETERMINATION ON USEFULNESS OF FORMAL AIR DEFENSE INFORMATION EXCHANGE AGREEMENT

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TO PAKISTAN. WE WOULD NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT THIS ISSUE STRIKES AT ESSTNCE OF LONG-STANDING PROBLEM IN THE CENTO RELATIONSHIP - AT WHOM IS THE ALLIANCE DIRECTED. PAKISTAN'S GREATEST SECURITY CONCERNS INVOLVE INDIA, AND ALTHOUGH GOP WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE DEEPLY INTERESTED IN ANY AGREEMENT THAT GAVE THEM A SENSE OF GREATER SECURITY VIS-A-VIS INDIA, THERE WOULD BE LESS INTEREST IN AN AGREEMENT DIRECTED AGAINST THE NORTH.

2. CONCERNING PARA 5.B. REFTEL, CENTO SECRETARY GENERAL BAYULKEN RECENTLY VISITED PAKISTAN AND, WE UNDERSTAND, PLANNED TO RAISE FORMAL AIR DEFENSE AGREEMENT PROPOSAL WITH HIGHEST LEVELS OF GOP. BAYULKEN TOLD THE AMBASSADOR HE DISCUSSED THE ISSUE WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY AGHA SHAHI WHO CLAIMED HE WAS UNAWARE OF THE QUESTION BUT WOULD LOOK INTO IT. BAYULKEN PLANNED TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH BHUTTO AND SAID HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT THE PM WOULD UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM AND THAT PERHAPS SOMETHING COULD BE WORKED OUT.

3. TURKISH DCM HAS TOLD US THAT BAYULKEN MET ALONE WITH BHUTTO FOR ABOUT ONE AND ONE-HALF HOURS. BAYULKEN LATER TOLD TURKISH EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT THE DISCUSSION WAS MOSTLY ABOUT PAKISTAN'S SECURITY NEEDS AND DOMESTIC EVENTS IN PAKISTAN AND TURKEY. BAYULKEN DID NOT MENTION IF THE PROPOSED AGREEMENT WAS DISCUSSED. WE ASSUME THAT ANKARA COULD RAISE THIS WITH SECRETARY GENERAL TO FIND OUT IF THE TOPIC WAS DISCUSSED AND, IF SO, BHUTTO'S REACTION.

4. LACKING A REPORT FROM BAYULKEN, WE CAN ONLY CONJECTURE AS TO WHAT THE GOP REACTION TO THE PROPOSAL WOULD BE. IF PAKISTAN SAW ITSELF GAINING SUBSTANTIAL BENEFIT FROM SUCH A FORMAL AGREEMENT, AND PROVIDED THE AGREEMENT WAS NOT WIDELY PUBLICIZED, WE THINK THE GOP WOULD BE WILLING TO AT LEAST SERIOUSLY CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL. HOWEVER, IF IT COULD NOT BE SHOWN AS DIRECTLY BENEFITTING PAKISTAN, AND IF IT WERE PUBLICIZED AS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN NATO-CENTO COOPERATION, THE GOP MOST PROBABLY WOULD NOT GIVE ITS SUPPORT. IF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN NATO AND IRAN UNDER CENTO AUSPICES IS POSSIBLE, AND ALL THAT IS NEEDED IS PAKISTAN'S ACQUIESCEANCE IN AN ARRANGEMENT IN WHICH IT WAS NOT ACTIVELY

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INVOLVED, WE BELIEVE THE CHANCES OF ACCEPTANCE HERE WOULD BE MUCH GREATER. THIS WOULD BE ESPECIALLY TRUE, OF COURSE, IF THE GOI LET IT BE KNOWN TO ISLAMABAD THAT THEY WANTED TO HAVE THE AGREEMENT.

5. THERE ARE SEVERAL VARIABLES WHICH MIGHT CHANGE THIS ASSESSMENT. AS MOST ADDRESSEES ARE AWARE, PAKISTANI PMD TO CENTO IS VERY CONSERVATIVE OFFICER WHO TAKE CAUTIOUS APPROACH TO ANYTHING HE SEES AS INNOVATIVE. HE ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY ERRS ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION IN INTERPRETING HIS GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FROM ISLAMABAD. THEREFORE, HIS NATURAL PROPENSITY WOULD BE TO OBJECT TO ANY FORM OF FORMAL NATO-CENTO AGREEMENT, REGARDLESS OF THE MERITS OF THE PROPOSAL. ALSO, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO HAVE THE UPPER LEVELS OF THE GOP FOCUS ON ANY SUCH PROPOSAL WHILE THE PRESENT POLITICAL CRISIS CONTINUES.

BYROADE

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